

RENAL FAILURE, CHRONIC

(Kidney Failure, Chronic)



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Inability of the kidneys to eliminate the body's waste products. Kidneys normally help rid the body of waste products, and when they fail, the waste products build up and cause symptoms that vary in severity. Chronic kidney failure usually develops gradually.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

None or few symptoms until 60% to 75% of kidney filtration fails. Then, one or more of the following:

- Listlessness, mental confusion and drowsiness.
- High blood pressure.
- Shortness of breath.
- Bad breath.
- Inflamed, bleeding gums and mouth ulcers.
- Abdominal pain.
- Itching skin.
- Numbness, tingling and burning in the legs and feet.
- Muscle cramps.
- Decreased sex drive.
- Cessation of menstruation.
- Anemia, with paleness and fatigue.
- Unusual bleeding.
- Muscle and bone pain. Bones break easily.

CAUSES

- Collagen diseases, such as systemic lupus erythematosus.
- Chronic glomerulonephritis.
- Chronic urinary-tract infections.
- Congenital kidney abnormalities, such as polycystic kidney disease.
- Kidney damage due to diabetes mellitus.
- Urinary-tract obstruction.
- Overdose of many drugs and chemicals, especially phenacetin or streptomycin.
- Blood-vessel diseases, such as hardening of the arteries in or leading to the kidney.

RISK INCREASES WITH

Any of the conditions listed in Causes.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Obtain medical treatment for underlying diseases that lead to uremia (kidney failure) before uremia results.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Kidney transplants can sometimes cure younger patients. Otherwise, kidney failure is a condition that worsens gradually, although a near-normal life span is possible if the condition stabilizes. Kidney dialysis treatment can improve and prolong life for several years.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Pericarditis.
- Myocarditis.
- Pneumonia.
- Pancreatitis.
- Hormone deficiencies.
- Fluid and electrolyte imbalance.
- Gastrointestinal ulcers.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Diagnostic tests may include laboratory blood counts, and blood and urine tests that measure kidney function and fluid and electrolyte balance, ECG (electrocardiogram—method of diagnosing heart diseases by measuring electrical activity of the heart); needle biopsy of kidneys; X-rays of the abdomen, kidneys, ureters and bladder to detect kidney stones.
- Surgery, if the cause can be corrected by surgery.
- Emergency hospitalization for fluid and electrolyte therapy and kidney dialysis (sometimes).
- Treatment will be determined by cause of the failure.
- Dialysis (artificial method of removing waste products from the blood) may be required until the kidneys recover their function.
- Weigh daily and keep a record.
- Measure the fluids you drink and the urine you pass each day. Keep a record, and take it with you to doctor visits. You should pass about 2500 ml or more of urine a day. If you pass less, decrease fluid intake so intake does not exceed output by more than 800 ml a day. For example, if you pass 2000 ml in 24 hours, don't drink more than 2800 ml in the next 24 hours.
- Additional information available from the National Kidney & Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse, Box NKUDIC, Bethesda, MD 20893, (301) 468-6345 or call the National Kidney Foundation, (800) 622-9010.

MEDICATION

- Diuretics to reduce fluid accumulation.
- Iron and folic-acid supplements for anemia.
- Stool softeners to prevent constipation.
- Digitalis for congestive heart failure.

ACTIVITY

You must reduce activity. Don't become overheated or fatigued. Sleep more at night, and take rests during the day. If you are confined to bed, flex your legs often to reduce the chance of blood clots in leg veins.

DIET

Eat a low-salt, low-potassium, low-protein diet with added fiber. Eat frequent small, high-calorie meals.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of chronic renal failure.
- The following occur during treatment:
 - Fever.
 - Vomiting or diarrhea.
 - Urine output of less than 2000cc.
 - Severe headache.
 - Convulsion.